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ABSTRACT

New York's "New Compact for Learning" in public elementary middle, and secondary schools is described in this booklet. Educational principles and strategic objectives are described, as well as the roles and responsibilities of the state, students, parents, teachers, support staff, principals, school district administrators, community, and institutions of higher education, culture, and business. Components of the compact include a focus on results, promotion of local initiatives, and empowerment of participants at all levels. (LMI)

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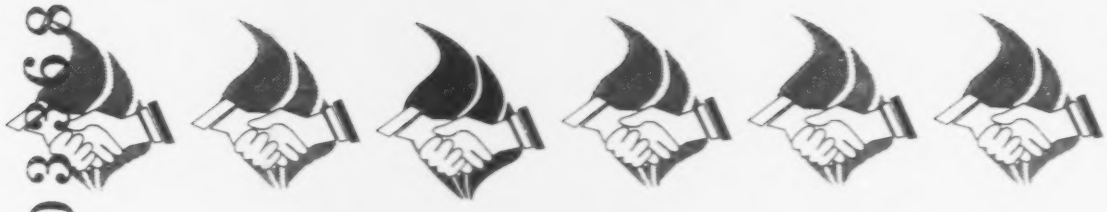

A NEW COMPACT FOR LEARNING

A Partnership to Improve Educational Results in New York State

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"We need a new commitment by all participants...

We need a New Compact for Learning – one which focuses on results, which promotes local initiative, and which empowers people at all levels of the system."

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Introduction

Our educational system today is meeting neither our aspirations nor our needs. Too many are left without the skills and knowledge to function effectively in a sophisticated society. Even many of our "best" students do not measure up to their potential — or to the academic achievements of the young people of competing nations.

The problem is simply stated: the legions of dedicated people who work in our schools are caught up in a system that is obsolete. Either we make fundamental changes in that system, or we begin the slide into a darker and less prosperous time.

Yet the changes we need cannot be made by the school system alone. What is required is a common effort by all members of our society to change the way we raise and educate our children.

WE NEED A NEW COMPACT FOR LEARNING.

In the words of the African proverb, "It takes the whole village to raise a child." Raising and educating our children better will require a bottom-to-top commitment of the whole community of New York State. Everyone — parents, students, teachers, school administrators, school board members, higher education, cultural and community organizations, and the business community — must play a role.

COLLECTIVELY, WE *ARE* NEW YORK. . .

AND WE *WILL* MAKE THIS COMPACT WORK.

Principles

The New Compact for Learning rests on certain core principles:

- ❑ All children can learn.
- ❑ Focus on results.
- ❑ Aim for mastery.
- ❑ Provide the means.
- ❑ Provide authority with accountability.
- ❑ Reward success and remedy failure.

Strategic Objectives

In changing how we educate our children in New York State, we start with a set of strategic objectives. We commit ourselves to make significant progress by the year 2000 in achieving these objectives:

1. All children will come to school ready to learn.
2. All children will read, write, compute, and use the thinking skills they need to continue learning by the time they are in the fourth grade or its equivalent.
3. At least 90 percent of all young people will earn a high school diploma by age 21.
4. All high school graduates will be prepared for college, work, or both.
5. All high school graduates will demonstrate proficiency in English and another language; in mathematics, the natural sciences, and technology; in history and other social sciences; and in the arts and other humanities.
6. All students will acquire the skills and knowledge needed for employment and effective citizenship.
7. All students will demonstrate commitment to the core values of our democratic society and knowledge of the history and culture of the major groups which comprise American society and the world.
8. Students of both genders and all socioeconomic and racial/ethnic backgrounds will show similar achievement on State assessment measures.

The State

The New Compact for Learning will use the power and influence of the State assertively — and it will require the collaborative energies of everyone. We cannot achieve the results we desire through top-down regulations alone. What we need is "top-down support for bottom-up reform."

Throughout the decade of the 1990s, the Board of Regents and the State Education Department will do the following to improve elementary, middle, and secondary education:

1. ***Set statewide goals.***
   - State more specifically the skills, knowledge, and values students should acquire as a result of elementary and secondary education.
   - The goals and desired learning outcomes will apply to all pupils.
2. ***Promote local initiative.***
   - Work to relax or remove rules and regulations which inhibit the schools in their efforts to reach State goals.
   - Promote teacher and parent participation in making decisions about educational matters in all schools.
   - Establish performance standards both for minimum competency and for proficiency in each subject.
3. ***Provide resources, incentives, and assistance.***
   - Specify and seek to provide the resources needed to allow all pupils to achieve State goals and desired learning outcomes.
   - Promote equity for all pupils throughout the State.
   - Seek to provide incentives and assistance to schools and school districts which exercise initiative to attain statewide goals and desired learning outcomes.

4. *Assess results.*

- Set standards and provide technical assistance for local programs of educational assessment.
- Use state assessment measures to promote progress and foster accountability.
- Revise the existing State testing program, except for Regents examinations. Assessments will not be limited to multiple-choice, standardized tests, but will include components such as examinations which measure problem-solving skills and the ability to analyze and synthesize; a portfolio of the pupil's best work, certified by the pupil's teachers and evaluated by qualified raters; and a professional evaluation of the pupil's accomplishments, made by the pupil's teachers.

5. ***Provide rewards for success and remedies for failure.***

- Seek to reward students, staff members, schools, and school districts for success.
- In schools with poor and declining performance, require focused school improvement planning and provide technical assistance to local practitioners in making the needed improvements. Such efforts by the State will be concentrated and sustained.

Students

The New Compact for Learning must begin and end with students themselves — students who are curious, questioning, restless, thoughtful, eager to use mind, imagination, and body to investigate something new, ready to do the hard work involved, willing to accept the occasional tedium, increasingly self-directed and self-disciplined.

Without the active engagement of the child, there is no learning.

Without the active participation of students, there is no Compact.

Parents

If children are to succeed in school, home and school must work together. If parents are truly to be partners in their children's education, schools must reach out to involve them; and parents need to take part in decisions affecting their children. As partners in education, parents have certain rights and responsibilities. Parents' rights include:

- to know what is expected of the child;
- to know what and how the child is being taught;
- to know what progress the child is making, on a timely basis;
- to be informed if the child experiences difficulty;
- to see the child's school records;
- to visit the child's school and talk to the child's teachers and principal;
- to be encouraged and assisted to participate in educational decision making; and
- to be treated with courtesy and respect by school personnel.

Parents' responsibilities include:

- to send the child to school rested, clean, fed, and ready to learn;
- to ensure that the child attends school regularly;
- to be aware of the child's work, progress, and problems;
- to maintain continuing contact with the child's teachers and principal;
- to reinforce at home the importance of acquiring the knowledge, skills, and values needed to function in society;
- to volunteer time, skill, or resources when needed and possible;
- to take part in school and community programs that empower parents to participate in making educational decisions; and
- to respond to communications from the child's school.

Teachers

In schools as we know them, the quality of children's education depends upon effective teachers. No one style of teaching is best for all students and all subjects. However, to be effective all teachers must enjoy the following conditions:

- a work load and schedule conducive to attaining desired learning outcomes;
- access to appropriate materials of instruction;
- access to the support services which students may need;
- a clean, safe, orderly physical environment;
- the support and respect of administrators, parents, and the community;
- opportunities for professional growth and development;
- sufficient authority to discharge their responsibilities effectively; and
- the rights and obligations of a licensed profession.

Teachers must be respectful of students and their parents and willing to devote the effort needed to achieve the desired learning results. Teachers must be accountable to their employers, students,

parents, colleagues, and the standards of the profession. Among the responsibilities of teachers are:

- to participate in making decisions about the educational program in the classroom and the school;
- to remain competent and current in the subjects they teach and in instructional methods and strategies;
- to expect all students to master the desired learning outcomes;
- to vary the materials, methods, and pace of instruction;
- to create a supportive learning climate in which all students can be successful;
- to maintain good communication with parents concerning their child's progress;
- to establish connections with other participants in the Compact; and
- to model for children reasoned approaches to problem-solving, the creation of an orderly work environment, and courteous, respectful treatment of others.

Support Staff

Counselors, school psychologists, social workers, attendance teachers, nurses and nurse practitioners, nurse teachers, and school physicians have traditionally worked to link the school and the community. Children are best able to concentrate, to absorb and retain information, to think creatively, and to solve problems when they are prepared for learning and comfortable in their learning situations. To promote such an environment, the pupil support team can help to:

- integrate pupil support activities more fully into school organization and operation, in order to meet students' individual needs;
- collaborate with the community to develop comprehensive programs that meet the combined needs of students and families;
- involve parents in their children's education and link the home, school, and community in order to help reduce any cultural distance between the family and the school; and
- arrange school-to-college and school-to-work experiences for students, including college study or work apprenticeships.

Food service workers, school bus drivers, office workers, members of the custodial staff, and others who work in the schools also contribute to the total environment for students. These participants in the New Compact should be involved in creating and implementing new forms of school operation. Performance of their duties and interactions with students can provide valuable lessons in the transition from school to work.

Principals

Strong leadership is vital to an effective school. The principal sets the tone; by encouraging teamwork and collaboration, by welcoming participation of parents and community members in the life of the school, by monitoring the performance of teachers and other members of the school staff, and above all, by expecting steady progress and high achievement of all pupils, the principal plays a key role in the New Compact for Learning.

Principals in the next decade will need the willingness and capacity to find better ways of organizing teaching and learning, and to implement them effectively and collaboratively. In order to do so, principals must enjoy the following conditions:

- clearly defined authority to discharge their responsibilities and to engage staff, parents, and students in making and implementing decisions;
- flexibility in organizing the school and determining how resources will be used in the pursuit of excellence;
- access to adequate resources for the provision of appropriate instructional materials, teachers, and support services, and for the maintenance of a clean, safe, orderly physical environment;
- the support and respect of the superintendent, teachers and other staff members, parents, and the community; and
- opportunities for professional growth and development.

The principal, in turn, must be respectful of teachers, students, and parents and willing to expend the effort needed to manage an effective school and achieve the desired results. Principals also must be accountable. Among the responsibilities of the principal are:

- to establish high expectations for staff and student performance;

- to remain abreast of research in education;
- to be actively involved in all aspects of the life of the school;
- to work well and ensure effective participation with the school's staff, students, parents and the community;
- to establish a system of rewards and recognition among teachers, staff, students, and parents; and
- to monitor and evaluate the school's total program and engage the staff in making appropriate changes.

Superintendents

Just as the principal sets the tone for a school building, the superintendent must coordinate the creation of a shared vision for the school district. In order to do so, the superintendent must enjoy the following conditions:

- a climate supportive of education, its impact and place in the community;
- the support and confidence of the Board of Education;
- the support and respect of the community at large, and of the administrators, teachers, and other school employees;
- clearly articulated expectations and authority to move the district toward the desired learning outcomes; and
- opportunities for continued professional growth and development.

The superintendent, in turn, must solicit opinion and nurture participation in order to engage the full community in the vision of the schools and the future of the children.

Among the responsibilities of the superintendent are:

- to establish, with the Board of Education, faculty, parents, and students, a positive climate in which attention and energies can be focused on education and the needs of children;
- to provide for the Board of Education, school personnel, and the public an assessment of the district's needs, both in educational and in general terms;
- to establish the means by which the school and the community in general can be involved in developing and sharing a vision and goals for the district;

- to provide a process by which these goals or priorities can be affirmed and the means to attain them established;
- to work to ensure that expectations are accompanied by the resources needed to achieve them;
- to assure that outcomes assessments are conducted periodically;
- to provide sustained support for the attainment of educational goals and for the efforts of staff; and
- to provide leadership in support of the district's goals.

School Boards

As the community members charged with responsibility for overseeing the operation of local public school systems, school boards play a pivotal role. It is up to them to create the conditions which will enable the other participants to fulfill the principles of the Compact.

School boards function most effectively when the following conditions prevail:

- they adhere to their policy making role, delegating the administration of the schools and holding accountable those to whom they delegate responsibility;
- they provide the resources necessary to allow all pupils to achieve State goals and desired learning outcomes; and
- they develop opportunities for everyone — staff, students, parents, and community organizations included — to participate in the educational enterprise meaningfully and purposefully.

School Districts

At the local level, this is the essence of the New Compact for Learning: that schools and school districts exercise initiative to make what changes may be needed to bring about the learning results we all desire. In a new relationship between the State and localities, the State defines more precisely *what* is to be learned, and local teachers, administrators, and boards of education have more freedom to decide *how* such learning is to occur.

Under the New Compact for Learning, local school districts will perform the following chief functions in improving elementary, middle, and secondary education:

- set local objectives and performance standards;
- provide resources, incentives, and assistance; and
- exercise initiative to develop and conduct educational programs which produce better results.

The Community

For children to learn and develop well, the entire community – parents, institutions of higher learning, other educational and cultural institutions, religious institutions, business, law enforcement agencies, volunteer and civic organizations, social service and health agencies – must be engaged in a partnership with the school.

Community and school collaboration to improve educational results means that:

- community members, organizations, and agencies work with one another and the schools to create and maintain a safe, wholesome environment for children;
- the community as a whole shows respect for children's achievement in school;
- all participants work together to create a sense of neighborhood and community in which each member, including every child, is known and respected;
- members of the community convey their expectation that children will behave appropriately and responsibly; and
- members of the community help children to gain maturity and responsibility by affording them opportunities for service.

Higher Education

Closer collaboration between the schools and institutions of higher education will be essential to reconceive New York's system of education. New York's higher education institutions, public and independent, can contribute by conducting and disseminating relevant research, by expanding their collaboration with other partners in the Compact, and, in some instances, by reviewing their own practices with regard to the Compact's principles. For example, colleges and universities and their members can:

- develop preservice and in-service education and professional preparation programs for a new generation of elementary, middle, and secondary teachers and administrators committed to achieving better results;
- collaborate in specifying the skills, knowledge, and understanding which students should acquire;
- conduct research and disseminate the results in forms useful to other researchers, practitioners, and the public;
- organize collaborative work and study among members of college faculty and their elementary and secondary teaching colleagues;
- collaborate in preparing a corps of teachers and supervisors to conduct School Improvement Reviews;

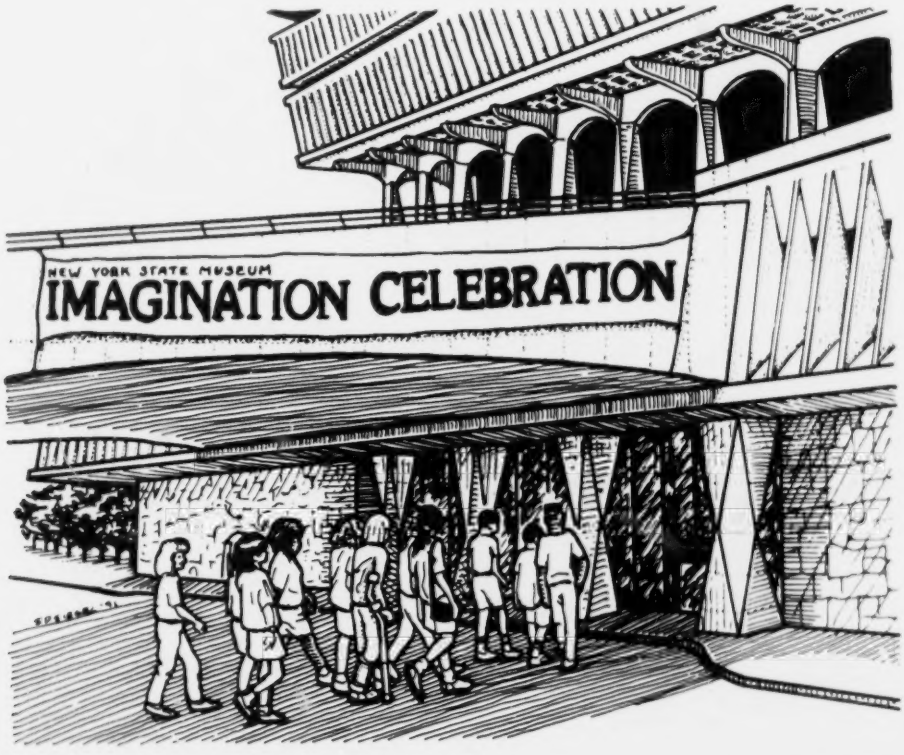
- collaborate in the development of educational networks which provide access to all areas of the State through electronic and other means of communication; and
- collaborate with schools to motivate and prepare elementary, middle, and secondary students for higher education.

Cultural Institutions

The habit of using the resources of thousands of institutions of cultural education in our State and its communities, formed through close collaboration in the school years, provides a basis for lifelong learning. The role of community cultural and arts institutions in the New Compact includes:

- collaborating in specifying the skills, knowledge, and understanding which students should acquire;
- collaborating with the schools to provide lessons that integrate cultural and artistic experiences into the curriculum;

- supporting teacher-education and in-service programs with materials and appropriate training;
- exploring, with business, the schools, and other community organizations, the possibilities for work/study, internships, or other experiences for students, and for staff exchange programs;
- collaborating in the development of educational networks;
- establishing branches of public libraries in school buildings, or in other institutions, to work with school libraries in support of educational programs;
- providing alternative learning sites and after-school and weekend programs, coordinated with programs in schools;
- providing materials and programs for early-childhood and parent education through libraries and educational television; and
- helping children become excited about learning before they enter schools, and supporting their learning through their school years and thereafter.



Business

The success of the public schools and the prosperity of business and industry are tightly linked. The schools cannot thrive without the support of a healthy private economy. Business and industry cannot do well without an educated, motivated, self-disciplined work force.

To implement the New Compact, business, industry, and labor can cooperate by:

- helping to specify the general and occupational skills, knowledge, and values which students should acquire;
- supporting the work and values of the school — especially the importance of achieving the desired learning outcomes;
- developing and conducting year-round work/study apprenticeships to motivate and prepare students for the work force;
- providing time for employees to visit their children's schools and to serve as mentors and resource people;
- providing space for kindergarten, day-care, and dependent-care programs for family members of employees and others;

- serving on boards of education and exercising leadership in parent organizations;
- lobbying with leaders of the education community for the changes necessary to achieve better results;
- lobbying with political and civic leaders for the resources necessary to provide a sound, basic education to all children; and
- providing resources for educational programs which promise better results.

Making Changes

This statement of the New Compact for Learning sets forth in broad terms the context of relationships and responsibilities within which we seek to educate our children, particularly in the State's public elementary, middle and secondary schools. In order for the Compact to work, all parties must take action to make changes.

At the State level, the Board of Regents will make appropriate changes in policy and regulation and propose statutory changes for consideration by the Legislature. The State Education Department will work with all parties to bring about the needed changes.

In schools and school districts, in colleges and universities, in libraries, museums, and other cultural institutions, in homes, neighborhoods, and communities throughout the State, all parties to the Compact should work to bring about the changes needed for all our children to learn better.

The full promise of the Compact will take many years to realize. But the work can begin at once — and, indeed, it has begun in many places. We must take action. We have only a few years left to prepare ourselves and our children for life in the 21st century.

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